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ARTICLE

Spontaneity and Self-Consciousness in the *Groundwork* and the B-*Critique*

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ABSTRACT

According to some influential readings of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the view presented there of the kind of spontaneity we are conscious of through theoretical reason and the significance of such self-consciousness is irremediably at odds with the Critical theory, and thus roundly and rightly rejected in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This paper argues, on the contrary, that the *Groundwork* can be read as articulating for the first time the account of self-consciousness and spontaneity that Kant goes on to develop in the B-*Critique*, especially the B-Transcendental Deduction.

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KEYWORDS Kant; freedom; spontaneity; self-consciousness

Abbreviations

Following standard practice, I refer to the 1781/1787 editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* using the A/B pagination. All other texts are referred to using the abbreviations below, followed by volume and page number from the Academy edition: *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1900–). Unless otherwise noted, translations of Kant's texts are from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992–).

Anth.: *Pragmatic Anthropology*
CJ: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*
CPrR: *Critique of Practical Reason*
G: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
JL: *Jäsche Logic*
MM: *Metaphysics of Morals*
M-D: *Dohna Metaphysics*

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M-L1: *L1 Metaphysics*
M-L2: *L2 Metaphysics*
M-Mrong.: *Mrongovius Metaphysics*
M-Vig.: *Vigilantius Metaphysics*
Progress: *What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany?*
Prol.: *Prolegomena to Any Further Metaphysics*

Introduction

There is a long and ongoing debate about how to understand the central arguments of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), Immanuel Kant's two foundational works in moral philosophy, in relation to each other.[1] Is a single theory being given two complementary presentations?[2] Or does a significant shift in doctrine, perhaps even a 'great reversal,' as one philosopher put it (Ameriks 2000, 226), occur between the two texts? And if there is a substantive change, is it an improvement?[3] At stake is an issue of special importance: the justification of morality. What kind of justification, if any, can be given of a fundamental moral law? What kind of justification, if any, do we *need* of a fundamental moral law?

This essay focuses on Kant's thought during the same time period, but it foregrounds a different pair of texts: the *Groundwork* and the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787). Kant explicitly claims that this second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter 'B-*Critique*') and the *Critique of Practical Reason* are in 'precise agreement' (*CPrR* 5.106; also 5.6–5.7). If we accept this, even just as a characterization of how Kant would like to be interpreted, then we would expect that at least some of the differences said to obtain between the 1785 *Groundwork* and the 1788 *Critique of Practical Reason* would be visible between the *Groundwork* and the 1787 *Critique of Pure Reason*, or at least that there would be some degree of ineliminable and disquieting tension between the two texts. But this is not, I will argue, what we find.

One Kant scholar who reaches the opposite conclusion is Karl Ameriks, and a quick summary of his account will provide me with a useful backdrop against which to situate my proposal. In a series of groundbreaking studies, Ameriks lays out the following narrative (2000, 191, 211–219, 2003). As student transcripts of metaphysics lectures delivered by Kant in the mid- to late-1770s reveal, during this period, Kant defends a set of rationalist arguments about the nature of the soul, arguments that purportedly prove that the soul is simple, substantial, single, and absolutely spontaneous – that is, transcendentally free, an uncaused cause. But a few short years later, in the A-*Critique* (1781), Kant rejects all of these arguments as fallacious – all, that is, but one. There is a conspicuous silence about spontaneity. In

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Ameriks's view, this is because Kant still endorses his pre-Critical position on the matter: the soul is absolutely spontaneous and we can know that it is. The central piece of evidence for this, according to Ameriks, is the *Groundwork*. There, Ameriks argue, the pre-Critical argument for our absolute spontaneity is essentially reprised, as Kant infers our absolute spontaneity from some self-conscious capacity of theoretical reason (cf. *G* 4.452 and *M-L1* 28.268–269; Ameriks 2000, 211–219, 2003, 225–247). But such a view would inevitably 'suffer…shipwreck,' as Ameriks puts it (2000, 191), for it lays claim to just the kind of metaphysical knowledge that the *First Critique* puts beyond our grasp. On Ameriks's reading, this failure shapes not just the doctrine of the *Second Critique* but also the revisions Kant makes to the *Critique of Pure Reason* for its second edition. In particular, Ameriks takes Kant to be at pains to develop his theory of self-consciousness in such a manner as to 'systematically block…even the suggestion of any kind of argument to absolute freedom' (2003, 258).

Ameriks's framework is, in my view, deeply illuminating. But whereas Ameriks sees a decisive break between the *Groundwork* and the B-*Critique*, it is possible to read the texts – especially *Groundwork III* and the B-*Transcendental Deduction* – as not just consistent with each other but strongly continuous, developing a single line of thought between them. I will suggest that the concerns about self-consciousness that Ameriks draws attention to in the B-*Critique* thread through *both* texts, and that the B-*Critique* fills in an account of self-consciousness, the shape of which is first outlined in *Groundwork* III. This essay is thus primarily devoted to laying out a reading of the *Groundwork* as prefiguring the B-Transcendental Deduction's account of self-consciousness. This task occupies part I; part II turns more programmatically to the B-Transcendental Deduction, delineating some of the parallels that emerge but also pointing to an important difference that obtains between the two. On the reading I end up with, a central aim of both texts is to argue for the necessity of a kind of self-consciousness that is fundamentally a consciousness of oneself as at once sensibly determined and free. The struggle to articulate this conception of self-consciousness and defend its possibility is central not only to the B-Transcendental Deduction, but also to *Groundwork III*.

Part I: *Groundwork III*

The first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is published in 1781, after a long period of gestation – the so-called 'silent decade'. But just two years after it is published, Kant identifies two sections of it that he is 'not fully satisfied with': the Transcendental Deduction and the Paralogisms (*Prol*. 4.381). These two sections of the text present Kant's theory of the cognitive role of self-consciousness: the Transcendental Deduction identifies the

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essential role of self-consciousness in making empirical cognition possible, while the Paralogisms reveal that the same self-consciousness generates an illusion of self-knowledge. Kant would indeed re-write these sections of the *Critique of Pure Reason* wholesale for the 1787 edition of the *Critique*, but it would not be surprising if we could see Kant grappling with these issues in the intervening years. I will suggest that they are central to Kant's thought in the 1785 *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.

But the main purpose of the *Groundwork* is, of course, not to give an account of self-consciousness, but to undertake the 'search for and establishment [*Festsetzung*] *of the supreme principle of morality*' (*G* 4.392; all emphases in original unless otherwise noted). The search, which unfolds over the first two parts of the text, begins with 'common cognition' and, by 'proceeding analytically,' excavates the moral principle underlying such cognition (*G* 4.392; see also *G* 4.445). In the course of this 'search,' it emerges that morality confers on humanity a special value as an end-in-itself (*G* 4.428–4.429); that as moral subjects, human beings possess dignity and command respect (*G* 4.436); that morality is an exercise in autonomy (*G* 4.431). But whether we really are such moral subjects as our everyday moral cognition takes us to be – that is left an open question until the third and final part of the *Groundwork*. There Kant turns to 'establishing' the moral principle, and with it, the value of humanity and the reality of human dignity and autonomy. It is this closing argument that I focus on in what follows.

§1. The Problem of Groundwork III

The search for the moral principle ends with a formulation of it as a principle of autonomy. *Groundwork III* picks up here, identifying freedom as the condition of autonomy. Kant defines freedom as the property of a will whereby it 'can be efficient independently of alien causes *determining* it' (*G* 4.446). This is a merely '*negative*' definition, he notes, but 'there flows from it a *positive* concept of freedom' as the property of a will by which it can be a 'law to itself' (*G* 4.447). And since this positive concept of freedom just describes a will under the principle of autonomy, and since the principle of autonomy is a formulation of the moral principle, it turns out that the 'free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same' (*G* 4.447).[4]

It thus appears that to establish the moral principle, we need to establish the reality of our freedom. But what Kant argues next is not that we are free – only that we must think of ourselves as free. The argument begins with the claim that 'reason must regard itself as the author of its principles, independently of alien influences' (*G* 4.448). Since heteronomy obtains just when a 'foreign impulse…give[s] the law' (*G* 4.444) (and since Kant takes heteronomy and autonomy to be exclusive and exhaustive), Kant's premise is that reason must regard itself as autonomous (*G* 4.448).[5] If this is true for

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reason in general, it is true for practical reason in particular; 'consequently, as practical reason or as the will of a rational being[, reason] must be regarded of itself as free' (*G* 4.448). Indeed, it follows that 'freedom must be presupposed as a property of the will of *all* rational beings' (*G* 4.447; emphasis mine). But Kant goes on to argue that a being that 'cannot act otherwise than under the idea of freedom is actually free, in a practical respect' – where to be free in such a 'practical' manner is to be subject to 'all laws that are inseparably bound up with freedom…just as if [we] had been validly pronounced free' (*G* 4.448). From this it follows that if we must think ourselves free, we must take ourselves to be bound by the laws of freedom; and since, as established earlier, 'freedom must be presupposed' of all rational beings, we must take ourselves and all other rational beings to be bound by the moral law.

But what does *not* follow from this argument is that we really *are* free. In these opening paragraphs, then, Kant renders the problem of *Groundwork III* more acute, rather than resolving it. Kant has shown that reason compels us to regard ourselves as free and thus as subject to the moral law – but he has given us no assurance that our freedom is not illusory. There is thus a justificatory task that remains outstanding, but there is another problem, too. As Kant puts it, were we to be asked why we acknowledge the moral law and the demands it places on us, why we hang our own 'personal worth' on our moral self-assessment, 'we could give…no satisfactory answer' (*G* 4.449–4.450). On the account just given, reason compels us in a way that leaves us fundamentally unintelligible to ourselves.

§2. The Solution to the Problem

What is the solution? Kant notes that 'one resource…still remains':

> whether we do not take a different standpoint when by means of freedom we think ourselves as causes efficient a priori than when we represent ourselves in terms of our actions as effects that we see before our eyes (*G* 4.450).

I will suggest that Kant takes the account just given in §1 – that we must presuppose our freedom, and that with this presupposition comes a commitment to the moral law – not to be wrong or mistaken, but to be importantly incomplete: it leaves out a shift in standpoint that occurs along the way. But what are these two standpoints? Instead of immediately characterizing them, Kant takes a circuitous route that starts from (what turns out to be) one standpoint and ends up in another standpoint. At least one of his reasons for proceeding this way is, I take it, to show that there is a natural route from the first standpoint to the second, even for 'the commonest understanding' – and thus to show that the second standpoint is as 'natural to our reason' as the first standpoint (*CPrR* 5.99). And the first

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standpoint is one that we all clearly do inhabit, for it is the one we occupy while engaged in prosaic everyday cognitive activities.

From this standpoint, we come to recognize that in order to cognize objects, we must be affected by them; and because of this, we cognize objects only if and as they appear to us, not as they are in themselves (*G* 4.450–451). As this is true of everything we are aware of through sensibility, it is true also of myself, since I am aware of myself through sensibility. I accordingly cognize the appearance of myself in the world of sense, not my 'ego as it may be constituted in itself' (*G* 4.451). From this first standpoint, then, the common understanding comes to recognize, even if but dimly, a distinction between what Kant calls the 'world of sense,' the familiar world constituted by appearances and cognized by us, and the 'world of understanding,' a world of things in themselves, conceived of as the metaphysical ground of the world of sense. And we view ourselves as we view other objects of the world of sense: all under 'laws of nature (heteronomy)' (*G* 4.452). We thus relate 'our actions as appearances to the sensible being of our subject' (*CPrR* 5.99).

But something complicates this picture. The 'human being really does find in himself,' Kant says, 'pure self-activity' (*G* 4.451). What is this pure self-activity? It is, I take it, the activity of reason in generating ideas, ideas that could not have originated in sensibility, since they outstrip not only what is given in sensibility but also what could be so given, ideas such as the idea of freedom or the idea that there is a way that the world ought to be.[6] Because we are conscious of this capacity of reason in us, Kant argues, we must think of ourselves, insofar as we are reasoners (or 'intelligences'), as members of the world of understanding. It is here that the transition to the second standpoint starts to occur – but it is far from clear exactly how this second standpoint is to be understood. A key but puzzling passage is the following:

> If we think of ourselves as free [*wenn wir uns als frei denken*], we transfer ourselves as members into the world of understanding, and cognize autonomy of the will, along with its consequence, morality; but if we think of ourselves as bound by duty we consider ourselves as belonging to the world of sense and yet at the same time to the world of understanding (*G* 4.453; translation modified).[7]

I will suggest that to understand this passage, it is necessary to distinguish between the world of understanding, the '*Verstandeswelt*' explicitly mentioned in the first half of the passage, and the intelligible world, or '*intelligibelen Welt*,' which is described, I will argue, in the second half.[8] Kant uses both terms frequently throughout *Groundwork III*, and most interpreters take them to be used interchangeably. But some passages strongly suggest that there is a difference the terms. For example, Kant writes that

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> The concept of a world of understanding is thus only a *standpoint* that reason sees itself constrained to take outside appearances *in order to think of itself as practical*, as…is…necessary insofar as he is not to be denied consciousness of himself as an intelligence and consequently as a rational cause active by means of reason, i.e., operating freely. This thought admittedly brings with it the idea of another order and another lawgiving than that of the mechanism of nature, which has to do with the sensible world; and it makes necessary the concept of an intelligible world (i.e., the whole of rational beings as things in themselves) (*G* 4.458).[9]

This passage, naturally read, suggests that there is a distinction between the idea of the world of understanding and a *different* idea that it brings in its train, viz., the idea of an intelligible world. So how should these two ideas be understood?

The thought of a world of understanding arises, as we have seen, from the standpoint of the common understanding engaged in everyday cognition. It is the thought of the metaphysical ground of the world of sense. Thus, insofar as there must be a metaphysical ground to my existence as a member of the world of sense, I locate it in the world of understanding. Moreover, insofar as I am conscious of myself as a reasoner, I must regard myself as reasoner to be free from 'alien influence', independent of the world of sense, and thus a member of the world of understanding. Whenever I reason, then, I take myself to do so as a free member of the world of understanding, and with the thought of my freedom comes, as Kant noted in the beginning of *Groundwork III*, the 'consciousness of a law for acting' (*G* 4.449). But I cannot get further than the mere thought of myself as free. I cannot cognize myself as free, since for that, as Kant puts it in the *Second Critique*, 'an intellectual intuition would be required' (*CPrR* 5.31). The world of understanding therefore remains something that I think myself into, but which is of unclear relevance and reality to me.

What about the intelligible world? Here we can find some clues in Kant's use of the term 'intelligible' in other contexts. In the Antinomies, for instance, Kant writes, 'I call intelligible *that in an object of sense* which is not itself appearance' (A538/B566; my emphasis). Notice the reference to an 'object of sense.' A similar connection with the sensible occurs in Kant's characterization of an 'intelligible cause': an intelligible cause is the non-sensible cause of an event *in the world of sense*, whereby the event is rightfully said to be 'free in regard to its intelligible cause' (though *also* fully determined by the order of efficient causes in the world of sense) (A537/B565). The same point is made in metaphysics lectures delivered by Kant while drafting the *Groundwork*. 'A foreigner called it wild fantasy to speak of the intelligible world,' he reportedly says, 'but this is just the opposite, for one understands by it not another world, but rather *this world* as I think it through the understanding' (*M-Mrong*. 29.850; emphasis

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mine). I will argue that the intelligible world, unlike the world of understanding, pertains specifically, in some sense, to the sensible world; and that it is specifically the idea of an intelligible world, not the idea of the world of understanding, that provides the second standpoint from which we can resolve the difficulties of *Groundwork III*.[10]

Recall that Kant says that it is 'when…we think ourselves as causes efficient a priori' that we 'take a different standpoint' (*G* 4.450). But what is it that we 'think ourselves…causes' of? It must be our existences as sensible beings. When the existence of a being in the sensible world is taken to be the appearance of an intelligence that is 'efficient a priori', the sensible existence itself is rendered the intelligible existence of a being determined (at least in part) by reason and comprehensible (at least in part) as the appearance of a free intelligence in the world of sense.[11] When we thus think ourselves members of such an intelligible world, we 'consider ourselves as belonging to the world of sense and yet at the same time to the world of understanding,' as Kant puts it (*G* 4.453).

To summarize the two standpoints, then: from the first standpoint, we view our existence in the world of sense as the existence of a purely sensible being, and we relate 'our actions as actions as appearances to the sensible being of our subject.' But from the second standpoint, we view our existence – again, our existence *in the world of sense* – as the existence of an intelligible being, for 'this sensible being is itself referred to the intelligible substratum in us' (*CPrR* 5.99). From the first standpoint, 'we represent ourselves in terms of our actions as *effects*' unfolding in the order of efficient causes; from the second, 'we think ourselves as *causes* efficient a priori' (*G* 4.450, emphases mine). From the first standpoint, we view ourselves 'under laws of nature (heteronomy)'; from the second, we view ourselves under a law 'grounded merely in reason' (*G* 4.452), which law 'is to furnish the sensible world, as a *sensible nature*…with the form of a world of understanding' and thus render it, on the reading I'm proposing, intelligible (*CPrR* 5.43).

The question that now arises is, Why is it legitimate to take myself to be a member of the intelligible world? I am essentially identifying the intelligence in the world of understanding that I think myself to be with the metaphysical ground of my existence. But though I must think that the metaphysical ground of my existence lies in the world of understanding, I have no knowledge of it – the metaphysical ground of my existence might well be an intelligence that is not me, for instance. Thus again, what licenses such an identification?

I take it that Kant's answer in the *Groundwork*, much like his answer in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, points to the reality of our experience of moral obligation. Recall that Kant says that 'when we think of ourselves as bound by duty we consider ourselves as belonging to the world of sense and yet at

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the same time to the world of understanding (*G* 4.453; translation modified) – that is, we consider ourselves members of an intelligible world. To experience moral obligation is to be conscious of the moral law as *actually* binding on me. It is an experience that is possible only for someone who is a member of both the world of understanding and the world of sense 'at the same time' *and* who is, as member of the world of understanding, the 'efficient cause a priori' of her appearance in the latter. That is, moral obligation is an experience that is possible only insofar as I do inhabit an intelligible world. For only a sensible self can feel constraint; but the constraint can be moral only when it arises from the autonomous self in the world of understanding. Thus, moral constraint arises because I am, as intelligence, 'efficient cause a priori' of the appearance of my sensible self. What therefore secures my right to take myself as inhabiting an intelligible world is everyday moral experience, my repeated encounters with the demands of duty as real constraints. Kant thereby returns to the common moral cognition with which he opened the *Groundwork* and reveals that our everyday moral experience of duty *is* the experience of a member of an intelligible world.[12] As Kant puts it a little later, through our consciousness of the moral law as binding on us,

> that unconditioned causality and the capacity for it, freedom, and with it *a being (I myself) that belongs to the sensible world but at the same time to the intelligible world*, is not merely thought indeterminately and problematically…but is even determined with respect to the law of its causality and cognized assertorically; and thus the reality of the intelligible world is given to us (*CPrR* 5.105; emphasis mine).[13]

Thus in the experience of moral obligation, the reality of the intelligible world and the validity of the moral law is established. So, too, is the value of *humanity*. It is not as mere intelligence that I am an end-in-itself; rather, it is in my humanity, as a human being existing in the intelligible world, that I am an end-in-itself.[14]

§3. ANew Problem, Left for Speculative Philosophy

Though *Groundwork III* thus resolves many of the problems it so acutely raised in its opening, a new problem is generated. We have left the subject, Kant says, with a 'seeming contradiction.' For 'if we think of ourselves as put under obligation we regard ourselves as belonging to the world of sense and yet at the same time to the world of understanding' (*G* 4.453). But can we really regard ourselves in this way? As both free and not free?

Kant says that in this case, it is actually the appearance of a contradiction that is illusory: 'something that is unifiable is represented as contradictory' (*Prol*. 4.343). And it is a 'duty incumbent upon speculative philosophy to

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remove the seeming conflict' (*G* 4.456). Kant scholars often take the Third Antinomy to be where theoretical reason discharges this duty (e.g., Timmermann 2007, 146–147). But what Kant demands is not just the proof that it's possible for freedom and determinism both to be true. As Kant puts it,

> it is an indispensable task of speculative philosophy *at least* to show that its illusion about the contradiction rests on our thinking of the human being in a different sense and relation when we call him free and when we hold him, as a part of nature, to be subject to its laws, and to show that both not only *can* very well coexist, but also must be thought as *necessarily united* in the same subject (*G* 4.456; see also *G* 4.457).[15]

The Third Antinomy accomplishes only part of this task: it shows that it is *possible* that we are both free and determined, but not that freedom and determinism 'must be thought as necessarily united.' How is this further task to be discharged?

Kant hints at an answer in the *Groundwork*:

> The human being…puts himself in a different order of things and in a relation to determining grounds of an altogether different kind when he think of himself as an intelligence endowed with a will…than when he perceives himself as a phenomenon in the world of sense….and subjects his causality to external determination…. Now he soon becomes aware that both *can* take place at the same time, and indeed *must* do so. For, that a thing in appearance…is subject to certain laws from which as a thing or a being in itself it is independent contains not the least contradiction; *that he must represent and think of himself in this twofold way, however, rests as regards the first on consciousness of himself as an object affected through the senses and as regards the second on consciousness of himself as an intelligence* (*G* 4.457; my emphases).[16]

This passage begins by reiterating the compatibility of freedom and determinism; it then points to the nature of self-consciousness to account for the necessity of thinking the necessary unity of freedom and determinism. Just such self-consciousness is, as Kant first makes clear in the B-Transcendental Deduction, a necessary condition of the possibility of cognition. It is not just the moral subject but also the cognizing subject who is necessarily conscious of herself as *at once* an intelligence *and* an appearance among other appearances in the sensible world, the former through apperception and the latter through inner sense. Thus the cognizing subject must think of herself as a subject in whom freedom and determinism are 'necessarily united' – and it is naturally the task of speculative reason to demonstrate that this is so. Kant sets himself to this task in the B-Transcendental Deduction; and it is to that difficult chapter of the B-*Critique of Pure Reason* that I now turn.

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Part II: The B-Transcendental Deduction

The Transcendental Deduction aims to show that the categories apply to 'all appearances of nature' (B165) and make experience, 'cognition through connected perceptions,' possible (B161). The first half of the B-Deduction is centered on one kind of self-consciousness: apperception, the consciousness we have of ourselves as thinking. The second half focuses on a second kind of self-consciousness: the consciousness we have of ourselves in inner sense. If Kant is pursuing the program I have suggested he sets for himself in the *Groundwork*, we would expect him to argue that the consciousness of ourselves in apperception as thinking grounds or otherwise forms the consciousness of ourselves in inner sense as beings in the world of sense, and that we thus take ourselves as beings in the world of sense as appearances of ourselves as thinking subjects. In the following discussion of the B-Deduction, my aim is to explore whether there is room in the text for such a reading.[17] I begin by discussing Kant's understanding of apperception; I then segue into a discussion of the argument of the B-Transcendental Deduction, pausing occasionally to compare it to the argument in the *Groundwork*.

Pure apperception is the 'pure consciousness of the activity that constitutes thinking' (*Anth*. 7.141), 'the consciousness of myself in mere thinking' (B429; see also B157-158, B413, *Anth*. 7.135fn and 7.142).[18] As thinking is, in turn, 'an act of the spontaneity of the power of representation' (B130), so apperception is consciousness of the spontaneous 'activity that constitutes thinking' (*Anth*. 7.141).

As Kant noted in the *Groundwork*, the spontaneity of understanding, the faculty of thinking, is not unfettered. For the categories of understanding 'serve merely to bring sensible representations under rules…without which use of sensibility it would think nothing at all' (*G* 4.452). Thus the consciousness of myself in thinking is also presumably the consciousness of spontaneous but not unfettered activity. But in the B-Deduction, Kant introduces another element of spontaneity. '[O]riginal apperception,' he says, 'in an act of spontaneity…produces the representation I think,' a representation that 'cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility' but is an expression of the very spontaneous and self-conscious thinking that it represents (B132). This introduction of the 'I think' into the Transcendental Deduction is, I note, new to the B-*Critique*; in the A-*Critique*, the 'I think' is first encountered in the Paralogisms (A341/B399). But what motivates its introduction into the B-Transcendental Deduction? And is this a significant change? To answer this question, I will pick out a path through the B-Transcendental Deduction that mirrors, to some degree, the argument of the *Groundwork*. The significance I attribute to this, and the reason I take the 'I think' to end up

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being central to the argument of the B-Transcendental Deduction, will hopefully become apparent as I proceed.

I begin with a quick synopsis of the relevant argument in *Groundwork III*. Kant begins by defending the claim that the 'free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same' (*G* 4.447). His next move is to argue that this premise does indeed apply to me, for I am subject to the moral law. That is clearly a synthetic claim. How can Kant assert it? What is the 'third thing' that puts me in relation to the moral law and thus grounds the synthetic claim? I suggested above that it is the intelligible world, which I occupy when I take myself, as intelligence and moral subject, to be the ground of my sensible existence. Perhaps it is not too much of a stretch to say that to take this second standpoint is to engage in a kind of practical 'synthesis' of the world of sense and the world of understanding.

Compare now the B-Transcendental Deduction. It also begins with a claim that Kant explicitly calls 'analytic': 'the I think must be able to accompany all my representations' (B131; for 'analytic', see B135 and B138). The 'I think' 'accompanies' representations that are combined in a judgment. Judgments combine representations by bringing them into a kind of unity that Kant calls the 'objective unity of apperception' (B141): a unity that obtains when representations are all united in the concept of an object, i.e., in a way that is determined *by* the object, not by the subject (B137, B139). When objective unity obtains, representations relate *to* the object in a way that is 'objectively valid' (B142) and amounts to cognition *of* the object. In every judgment, then, the 'I' that thinks 'accompanies' all the representations taken up in its judgment, which representations that 'I' calls '*my* representations'. And for any 'I' that takes itself to make several judgments, it must be able to combine them all in a single objective unity; and all the representations thereby taken up in this unity will be called 'my representations' by that judging 'I'.[19] What makes Kant's analytic claim analytic, then, is Kant's conception of judgment: for any 'I' that judges, all her manifold of representations 'has a necessary relation to the I think in the same subject in which this manifold can be encountered' (B132).[20]

Kant then argues that this analytic principle presupposes a synthesis (B132, B133, B134, B135, B138 and B143). As Kant puts it, 'the thought that these representations given in intuition all together belong to me [i.e., are *my* representations] means…the same as that I unite them in a self-consciousness' (B134); or again, 'only because I can comprehend their manifold in a consciousness do I call [these representations] all together *my* representations (B134, emphasis mine; see also B132 and B133). The claim is that a synthesis is necessary in order to make it possible to speak of 'my representations' in the first place. But why might this be? Recall that apperception is a consciousness of myself that accompanies thinking. I am thus conscious of myself as long as I am engaged in an activity of

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synthesizing or thinking. But it is only if I go on to *effect* a synthetic unity that I first become conscious of my *identity*: that the 'I' who thinks the effected synthetic unity is the 'I' who synthesized the manifold into the unity and the 'I' for whom each of the manifold representations is 'my representation'. This synthesis therefore first makes it possible to talk of 'my representations' because it makes it possible to talk of an 'I'; until such a synthesis takes place, there is as 'multicolored, diverse a self as I have representations' (B134).

The analytic premise thus presupposes a synthesis. Kant calls this synthesis the 'original-synthetic unity of apperception' (B131, B136). And he argues that the 'supreme' principle of the understanding is, simply, to bring all manifold of intuition to the original-synthetic unity of apperception, and thus to the synthetic unity that is necessary for judgment to be possible (B135; see also B136 and B137). The original-synthetic unity of apperception is thus a synthesis that must obtain in order for there to be a self-conscious cognizer, an 'I' that can think, an 'I' to whom the 'supreme' principle of the understanding is addressed; it is also the synthesis that the supreme principle of understanding enjoins us to realize. It is thus akin to the idea of the intelligible world: we must think ourselves into the intelligible world in order to undertake the standpoint of moral agency, the standpoint of a subject to whom the moral law is addressed; and what the categorial imperative enjoins is that we act *as* members of the intelligible world, as free intelligences answering only to principles of reason.[21] It is this idea of the original-synthetic unity of apperception that I focus on in the rest of this discussion.

At the very end of the B-Transcendental Deduction, Kant characterizes the original-synthetic unity of apperception as 'the form of the understanding in relation to space and time, as original forms of sensibility' (B169). This is the claim that Kant needs to defend to complete the argument of the Transcendental Deduction. For if space and time and everything given *in* space and time stand under the original-synthetic unity of apperception, then, given what Kant has already shown, it follows that judgment about such spatiotemporal objects is always possible and that the categories apply to them.

It is time that is of central interest to this project. Time is the form of inner sense; it is thus, Kant says, the 'fundamental' form of sensibility – presumably because everything given in space is also given in time (B150). But space and time are also themselves intuitions, with the unity of an intuition (B136n; also B160-161 and B160-161fn). Now Kant has already argued that 'all manifold of intuition has a necessary relation to the I think in the same subject in which this manifold is to be encountered' (B132). This is as true for the intuition of time as it is for our other representations, and it is true in

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virtue of the nature of our understanding and its requirements. As Kant puts it,

> time…merely as intuition in general, which contains a given manifold, stands under the original unity of consciousness, solely by means of the necessary relation of the manifold of intuition to the one I think, thus through the pure synthesis of the understanding (B140).[22]

But how is it possible to bring time, 'as intuition in general', to the original-synthetic unity of apperception? What does that mean, when time is also the form of intuition?

Here is one way I think the account might be fleshed out. Kant writes that

> The understanding, as spontaneity, can determine inner sense through the manifold of given representations in accord with the synthetic unity of apperception, and thus think *a priori* synthetic unity of the apperception of the manifold of sensible intuition, as the condition under which all objects of our (human) intuition must necessarily stand, through which then the categories… acquire objective reality (B151).

Kant points here to the doctrine of self-affection: that our apperceptive activities of reasoning and of judging affect us and are represented in inner sense. Perhaps one way to understand the passage above is to take it as saying that insofar as we are thinking as we should, bringing representations given in outer sense to the unity of apperception, the manifold of inner sense, which is populated by the workings of the understanding, will also stand under the unity of apperception (see also B153 and B155). Another piece of the account is given by Kant's introduction of the 'transcendental synthesis of the imagination'. He characterizes this synthesis as 'an effect of the understanding on sensibility' that 'determine[s] the form of sense a priori in accordance with the unity of apperception' (B152). The understanding's activity of synthesis affects sensibility to produce a succession of representations. Insofar as the understanding synthesizes the spatial manifold in the way it ought to, bringing it to the unity of apperception, the activity produces a single temporal succession in inner sense, again in accordance with the unity of apperception, that relates to and unifies the spatial manifold.

On the account roughly sketched out, the form of inner sense and its unity is determined by the unity of apperception. Here, as in the case of the intelligible world, I am thus a unity *in* the sensible world only insofar as the 'I' as intelligence and its demand for unity is the ground of this appearance. In the moral case, a causally determined heap of desires and impulses can be rendered the intelligible appearance of a finite and flawed but moral agent whose commitment to the moral law confers unity on this sensible existence. In the case at hand, a set of perceptions and other mental representations, loosely related by associative ties, is rendered the

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intelligible appearance of a finite but rational thinking subject insofar as the thinker brings these representations to the unity of apperception. The supreme principle of the understanding thus applies to us, and judgment is possible, insofar as our existence in the sensible world is determined by our rational activity as intelligences. If this condition obtains, however, my sensible existence *is* that of a rational thinker: 'I as a thinking being am one and the same subject with myself as a sensing being' (*Anth*. 7.142; see also B156, B157-158, and B429).

I have been arguing that it is possible to see striking similarities between the arguments of the *Groundwork* and the B-Deduction; and I have suggested that this reflects an ongoing project on Kant's part to sketch out and clarify the nature of self-consciousness. There is, however, one important difference between the two contexts. In its account of theoretical reason and the cognizing subject, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant says, 'place[s] reason in its proper territory, namely the order of ends that is yet at the same time an order of nature' (B425). In our various cognitive activities, we may think of ourselves as free intelligences in the world of understanding, and we may drive our inquiry in various self-determined ways, but we cannot thereby gain cognition of our freedom. Thus, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes that

> although a human being has, in his understanding, something more than [animals] and can set himself ends, even this gives him only an *extrinsic* value (*MM* 6.434; also 6.418).

It is only in moral contexts, according to Kant, that the reality of our freedom is secured. But of course, 'moral contexts' are not isolable aspects of life; we thus find ourselves encountering our moral obligations – and our freedom – when we are engaged in our aesthetic and scientific projects just as much as when we are involved in the more practical matters of life.

Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that the *Groundwork* and the B-Deduction both develop an account of our moral and cognitive life as driven by the consciousness of ourselves as at once sensible and spontaneous beings, members of both the world of sense and the world of understanding. This is a point Kant returns repeatedly to in years to come. In a late metaphysics lecture series, for instance, Kant reportedly says,

> *the striking phenomenon with a human being is that freedom united with natural necessity is found in him*. [. . .] [H]e is. . .affected by lower powers but determines himself by the independence of reason, and so he appears as ordered under reason and nature not successively, but rather at the same time (*M-Vig*. 29:1019-20; see also Bxxvii-xxviii, *CPrR* 5.6fn, and *M-L2* 28.583).

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Kant says that to be conscious of oneself in this way, a person just needs to view his 'existence as determinable only through laws that he gives himself' (*CPrR* 5.97). I have argued that it is specifically our sensible existence that we thereby come to see as intelligible. And though much more work would need to be done even to characterize this conception of self-consciousness adequately, one attractive feature of this view, at least from my perspective, is that it makes it possible to encounter people and projects with absolute value, dignity, and moral worth in *this* world: the world that we're living in.

Notes

1. Owen Ware makes the interesting observation that there is no indication that Kant's earliest readers saw an inconsistency between the two texts (Ware 2017, 117–119). Ware traces the debate back to the 1960 publication of now-seminal studies of the *Second Critique* by Dieter Henrich (1994) and Beck (1960).
2. For readings that find continuity between the two texts, see Onora O'Neill (2002) and cf. Sergio Tenenbaum (2012) and Ware (2017).
3. Some take the *Second Critique* to give up altogether on the project of justification that is central to the *Groundwork*. Among these, Ameriks (2000, 2003, 161–192, 255–258), Beck (1960, 166–175); Paul Guyer (2016, 127–145), and Henrich (1994) take this to be progress; Allen Wood disagrees, memorably saying that the *Second Critique* retreats to mere 'moralistic bluster' (2007, 134–135). Others find a slightly less-radical change between the two texts – less 'reversal' than 'retreat,' as Jens Timmermann puts it (2010, 89). Some argue, for instance, that the justificatory project remains in place but is re-conceived, shedding some of the misplaced aspirations of the *Groundwork*. Henry Allison's interpretation falls in this category; he takes the *Groundwork* argument to be deeply problematic, though he mitigates his criticisms somewhat in his latest study (2011, 330n58; cf., 1986; 1990, 288, 230, 234–239). Timmermann can also be put in this category, though he finds the argument of the *Groundwork* less hopeless than Allison does (Timmermann 2007, 133–144, 2010).
4. Many difficult issues are sidestepped in the above. I mention just one: are negative and positive freedom two different kinds of freedom, or are they two ways of conceiving one and the same freedom? After all, as Paul Guyer observes, what Kant says is that these are two concepts of freedom (2018, 129). Positive and negative freedom are treated as two conceptions of the same freedom by O'Neill (1989, 52–53) as well as Guyer; they are taken to be two kinds of freedom by Allison (1995, 18–21).
5. It is sometimes argued that Kant is talking specifically about theoretical reason (except when he explicitly refers to 'practical reason'). Henry Allison, for instance, accordingly takes this passage to be pointing to 'the necessity of reason to regard itself as free in its epistemic capacity' (1990, 217–218; also, 2013, 289). Allen Wood agrees (2007, 130–131). But during this period, Kant appears to assume that reason is a unity – indeed, a unity that might one day be demonstrable (*CPrR* 5.91). As he puts it in the Preface to the *Groundwork*, 'there can, in the end, be only one and the same reason, which must be

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distinguished merely in its application' (*G* 4.391; see also Bxxxviii, A811/B839-A812/B840, A840/B868; and *CPrR* 5.89, 5.91, and 5.121). And in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant often talks about 'reason' as a single faculty that has two uses: a 'speculative use' in which it 'accomplishes nothing' with respect to its highest metaphysical aspirations, and a 'practical use' in which it eventually finds its 'ultimate end' (A795/B823-A797/B825). (For a helpful discussion of these passages, see Timmermann 2019.) Though the distinction between the two kinds of reason becomes sharper in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, it is not until the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) – e.g., *CJ* 5.174–5.176 – that the unity of reason is clearly a problem.

6. Kant's talk of 'reason' is again often taken to refer specifically to theoretical reason (e.g., Allison, 1990, 221–223, 2013, 289; Hill 1992, 120; Korsgaard 1996, 170). (Indeed, some who deny that the earlier passage (*G* 4.448) refers specifically to theoretical reason do make that claim here (see Guyer 2018, 155; Timmermann 2007, 137).) For a dissenting view that takes 'reason' to be pure practical reason, cf. Tenenbaum (2012) and Ware (2017). But again, I think that Kant might be thinking of reason as a single faculty (albeit one with an ultimately practical use). Thus note the similarity in language between the *Groundwork*, where Kant writes that 'reason…shows in what we call "ideas" a spontaneity so pure that it thereby goes far beyond anything that sensibility can ever afford it' (*G* 4.452), and the *First Critique*, where he writes that 'reason does not give in to…grounds which are empirically given, and it does not follow the order of things as they are presented in intuition, but with complete spontaneity it makes its own order according to ideas' (A548/B576). Here Kant is speaking specifically of reason insofar as it generates 'the ought' – reason in its practical use (see, e.g., A547/B575).
7. For a different reading that also takes this passage to be significant, especially the reference to obligation, see Tenenbaum (2012, 580–581).
8. In *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, Henry Allison also argues that Kant distinguishes between the world of understanding and the intelligible world. According to Allison, the world of understanding is a noumenon in the negative sense, viz., a non-sensible world, whereas the intelligible world is a noumenon in the positive sense, a 'supersensible realm governed by moral laws,' i.e., the Kingdom of Ends (1990, 227; Allison has since rejected this view – cf. his, 2011, 338n28). In the above, I propose a different reading of this distinction; however, my interpretation of the intelligible world draws on an understanding of what Kant means by 'intelligible' that is close to what Allison says in his analysis of 'intelligible character' (1990, 29–53).
9. Allison also puts a lot of weight on this passage (1990, 227).
10. A similar reading of the 'intelligible' is given by Onora O'Neill, who writes that '[t]he intelligible world is not a transcendent realm beyond this world, but the system of formal conditions that our understanding of the empirical world presupposes; it is precisely intelligible, not supersensible' (1989, 69).
11. Thanks to Alix Cohen for helping me clarify this point.
12. This is in fact what Kant, in the Preface to the *Groundwork*, says he will do in *Groundwork III*: there, he says, the argument will proceed 'synthetically from the examination of [the moral] principle and its sources back to the common cognition in which we find it used' (*G* 4.392).
13. As is clear from the above, I take there to be continuity between the *Groundwork* and the *Second Critique*. On the reading I am proposing, in the

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Groundwork, the argument runs from freedom to the moral law – but not from the proof of my freedom. Rather, it runs from the *use* of my freedom that is necessary to have the experience of moral obligation, to the consciousness of the moral law as binding on me. And this is consistent with the argument of the *Second Critique*. For as Kant puts it there, 'had not the moral law already been distinctly thought in our reason, we should never consider ourselves justified in assuming such a thing as freedom.… But were there no freedom, the moral law would not be encountered at all in ourselves' (*CPrR* 5.4fn).

14. In *Groundwork II*, Kant says that the task of grounding the claim that 'rational nature exists as an end in itself' is undertaken in *Groundwork III*. I take it to be in the idea of the intelligible world that this promissory note about 'rational nature' is discharged (*G* 4.428–429 and 4.429fn; emphasis mine).
15. Ameriks says that in this passage, Kant identifies a 'crucial' or 'real' need that is *not* met by the arguments of the *Groundwork*. I agree with this, but Ameriks goes on to suggest that this reveals a weakness in the argument of the *Groundwork*, whereas I think it does not. See Ameriks (2003, 175).
16. In texts that post-date the *Groundwork*, Kant frequently emphasizes the fact that the human being must be conscious of herself as *at once* free and not free. Thus in Bxxvii-xxviii, he writes, 'I…say of one and the same thing, e.g., the human soul, that its will is free and yet that it is simultaneously…not free.' And in *CPrR* 5.6n, the connection is made again with the nature of self-consciousness: 'the union of causality as freedom with causality as natural mechanism…in one and the same subject, the human being, is impossible without representing him with regard to…the former in *pure*, the latter in *empirical* consciousness.' See also *G* 4.453, 4.454, 4.455; *CPrR* 5.97, 5.105; *M-L2* 28.583; and *M-Vig*. 29.1019–1020, *inter alia*.
17. My discussion thus focuses on the subjective strand of the argument; the question of how experience is thereby made possible is largely set aside, and the further tasks of defending the interpretation and the theory that emerges from it is not even embarked upon.
18. Kant uses a number of terms for this kind of consciousness, including 'logical' or 'discursive' consciousness (*Anth*. 7.141), the 'consciousness of understanding' (*Anth*. 7.135fn), 'intellectual consciousness' (*Leningrad Fragment I, M-D* 28.670–671). And though Kant's emphasis remains on apperception as consciousness of an activity, some cryptic remarks suggest that this consciousness is not entirely metaphysically noncommittal. Consider, for instance, Kant's claim that 'in the consciousness of myself in mere thinking I am the being itself' (B429), or that 'apperception is something real' (B419).
19. The kind of unity that obtains when a single 'I think' accompanies several judgments is the 'analytical unity of apperception' mentioned in B133; and the point I discuss in the next paragraph above – that a synthesis is necessary for the analytic premise to obtain – is Kant's claim that 'the analytic unity of apperception is only possible under the presupposition of some synthetic one' (B133-134).
20. For three different interpretations of the analytic principle, see Allison (2004, 166–167), Kitcher (2011, 124–126) and Longuenesse (2017, 177–181). In my analysis, I take Kantian 'judgment' the way it is defined in the B-*Transcendental Deduction*, which I think involves a shift from the view of the *Prolegomena* (see, e.g., *Prol*. 4.298, 4.300–4.306). See Pollok (2008) for an argument for this

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claim; for a defence that the *Prolegomena* view is consistent with the B-*CPR* view, cf. Longuenesse (1998, 167–195).

21. I thank Thomas Land for suggesting I make this connection explicit.
22. This point touches on issues that are central to the conceptualism/non-conceptualism debate, which has recently focused on the unity of time and space and whether such unity has its source in intuition itself or whether it is conferred by the faculty of understanding (or perhaps apperception). I believe that what I say above remains neutral. When Kant talks about the 'pure synthesis of the understanding', for instance, in the passage quoted above, I take him to be referring not to the synthesis that makes time a unity, but the synthesis that brings the intuition of time to the original-synthetic unity of apperception. For arguments that space and time have their own unity, see, e.g., Allison (2004, 191–193), Colin McLear (2015), and James Messina (2014); for arguments that take the unity of space and time to be generated by a synthesis that is in some sense informed by the understanding (though not itself a conceptual synthesis), see, e.g., Thomas Land (2015), Longuenesse (1998, 214–241, 2005, 105–106), Michael Friedman (forthcoming).

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